

REMARKS

The specification has been amended and an abstract has been added to place the application in condition for allowance at the time of the next Official Action.

The original claims have been replaced with new claims that are believed to be proper as to form. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under §112, second paragraph, are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 6, 8-15 and 30-31 were rejected as anticipated by HATANAKA et al. EP 0 619 679 A1, and the remainder of the claims were rejected as unpatentable further in view of CHAMPA et al. WO 98/23075 and BRUNO et al. 5,710,591. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested in view of the new claims.

The new claims are directed to a process and apparatus for carrying out and managing a videoconference among a plurality of user locations. A direction room is linked to a plurality of user locations from which audiovisual signals originate, and audiovisual signals are converted from their respective signal formats to at least one transmission signal format before transmission of the audiovisual signals to the direction room and then are transmitted from the user locations to the direction room using the at least one transmission signal format. Prior to using the audiovisual signals at the direction room, all of the

received audiovisual signals are converted into a common audio video format. At the direction room, the audiovisual signals in the common audio video format are selected to send to the user locations employing an input audio video matrix, and further information is added in the common audio video format to the selected audiovisual signals to form complete outgoing signals in the common audio video format. The complete outgoing signals are converted from the common audio video format to the at least one transmission signal format before transmission of the complete outgoing signals to the user locations and then transmitted from the direction room to the user locations using the at least one transmission signal format.

While the specification as filed does not use the term "common audio video format," one of skill in the art will understand that this is what is intended by the description of the invention at, for example, page 8, lines 9-13.

The applied prior art has been very carefully considered and the new claims are patentable because the applied prior art does not disclose the step (or corresponding means) of, prior to using the audiovisual signals at the direction room, converting all of the received audiovisual signals into a common audio video format, or the step of adding further information in the common audio video format to the selected audiovisual signals to form complete outgoing signals in the common audio video

format. See, for example, HATANAKA et al. at Figure 14 and the related discussion at column 23, the last sentence of the abstract in CHAMPA et al. These systems require that each signal type be processed in a different manner and provide specific devices for this purpose. This requirement makes the efficient management of a videoconference particularly difficult, especially when additional material is to be added to the signals as in the claimed invention. The invention claimed herein simplifies the processing required to manage a videoconference and to add further information to the signals and thereby avoids the problems of the prior art. Accordingly, the new claims avoid the rejections of record.

The apparatus claims define the invention in "means-plus-function" form and these claims to be interpreted under §112, sixth paragraph. The corresponding structure is shown in Figure 2.

In view of the present amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is believed that the present application has been placed in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

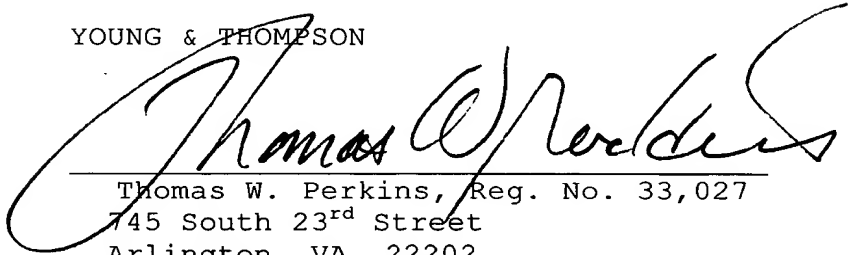
The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any

Application No. 09/701,794  
Amdt. dated October 16, 2003  
Reply to Office Action of April 16, 2003  
Docket No. 2507-1041

overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional  
fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG & THOMPSON

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Thomas W. Perkins". The signature is written over a horizontal line that separates it from the printed contact information below.

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